



*People, Pride & Progress*

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**CITY HALL**  
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## Short History of Whittier



Whittier is located in Los Angeles County, about 12 miles southeast of the City of Los Angeles. A five Member City Council under the Council-Manager form of government directs the City. Whittier is a charter law city and was incorporated in 1898. The Charter form of City government was ratified in 1955. The City covers 14.8 square miles and has an estimated population of 87,190. Businesses and industries in the area include 462 professional services, 554 retail stores, 178 family-type restaurants, 45 manufacturing plants, 6 hotels and motels, 14 automobile dealerships and over 200 specialty shops and boutiques, predominantly located in Uptown Whittier, as well as the Whittwood and Quad shopping malls.

In 1784 Manuel Nieto, a retired captain who served in the Portola Expedition, was granted 300,000 plus acres of land by the King of Spain. The land grant, in what is now California, stretched from the hills north of Whittier to the sea, and from the Santa Ana River to the San Gabriel River. By 1822 Mexico had achieved political independence from Spain, recalled the Spanish-appointed Governor from Alta California and appointed its own. In 1834 Mexico began to "secularize" the missions and issued land grants to individual rancheros. Juan Crispin Perez received a grant for Rancho Paso de Bartolo in 1835 for land that had initially belonged to the San Gabriel Mission. Perez eventually sold five parcels of the Paso de Bartolo land to Pio de Jesus Pico (1801-1894), a ranchero who had already served as Governor once (1832-33) and was to become last Mexico-appointed Governor of California (1845-46). Pico built his home east of the San Gabriel River and South of Whittier Boulevard (El Camino Real), now the Pio Pico State Historic Park. The Park has recently undergone extensive renovations and re-opened in September 2003. For more information on the Pio Pico Adobe and Gardens, please [click here](#).

Modern Whittier's roots can be traced to 160 acres of public land acquired in 1868 by Jacob Gerkens. Gerkens was a German immigrant who paid \$234 to the U.S. government for the land under the auspices of the Homestead Act. Mr. Gerkens built a small cabin on the property which stands today as the Jonathan Bailey House. The land changed hands several times before 1959.

